

**FINAL MEETING SUMMARY  
SR 520 BRIDGE REPLACEMENT & HOV PROJECT  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON'S CENTER FOR URBAN HORTICULTURE, SEATTLE, WA  
DECEMBER 10, 2002 – 3:30 – 5:30 P.M.**

**INTRODUCTION & MEETING OBJECTIVES**

Maureen Sullivan, WSDOT, opened the meeting by stating that both Aubrey Davis, Chair of the Washington State Transportation Commission, and Dave Earling, Chair of the Sound Transit Board, were unable to chair the committee meeting due to extenuating circumstances. Maureen continued by stating that the meeting objective was to share information, not to make major decisions regarding the project. She explained that the results of the November vote, Referendum 51, have greatly affected this project as well as a lot of transportation projects in this region. Maureen then went over the items on the agenda, including presentations on 8-lane traffic modeling results; project status; tolling report; and funding.

**NEWEST 8-LANE TRAFFIC MODELING RESULTS**

Les Rubstello, WSDOT, presented information on the new 2030 Freeway Report (November 2002). This effort began February 2002 and ended in November 2002. The 8-lane option traffic results have changed since the 2020 Freeway Report (December 2001). In the 2020 report, for 8-lane westbound (WB) traffic during the morning peak period, there were 18,075 vehicles served, a queue across the lake for peak hour only, and a 31-minute travel time from I-405 to I-5. In the 2030 Freeway Report with the same variables, there were 16,900 vehicles served, a 4-hour queue across the lake to I-405, and a 60-minute travel time from I-405 to I-5. Reasons for the 8-lane performance change were severe congestion on I-5, forcing all but long trips to use local streets, and parking pricing, reducing SOVs going to Seattle CBD. The result is more added traffic from SR 520 staying on I-5 and going through town – those who go into downtown take side streets.

Les referenced charts detailing morning WB traffic flow for the following conditions: existing; 2030 no action; 2030 6-lane; and 2030 8-lane. The existing conditions have the slowest traffic between the 84<sup>th</sup> on-ramp and the 92<sup>nd</sup> off-ramp. The 2030 no action WB conditions have the slowest traffic between 148<sup>th</sup> on- and off-ramps. The 2030 6-lane WB conditions have the slowest traffic between I-5 and the east end of the bridge and then again between SR 202 and Avondale approaching Redmond. The 2030 8-lane AM conditions have the slowest traffic between I-5 and Bellevue Way off-ramp and then again at SR 202 and Avondale approaching Redmond. The following questions and points were brought up at this time:

- Senator Jim Horn inquired whether the project has looked at ways to improve the throughput on I-5. These decisions cannot be made independent of each other. This is nine percent of the congestion problem. Les Rubstello responded that three lanes is the

most that can run through the narrow part of downtown and that there is a study looking at I-5 improvements.

- Phil Noble, City of Bellevue, asked if similar analysis had been done for eastbound traffic in the morning and evening. Les Rubstello responded in the affirmative. The eastbound commute has different problems. The 6-lane is worse for eastbound traffic. The interchange designed by the project let many cars off creating a huge bottleneck at 148<sup>th</sup>. The 8-lane scenario does not have a bottleneck there because it opens up to the Microsoft Campus.
- Daniel Becker, City of Medina, asked what constitutes normal travel time from SR 202 in Redmond to I-5. Les Rubstello responded that because it was 13 miles, freeflow travel time would be 13 minutes.
- Connie Marshall, City of Bellevue, inquired what the traffic flow situation would be for the 4-lane alternative. Les Rubstello responded that it would be similar to 2030 no action. The bottleneck moves back to I-405.
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- Connie Marshall commented that I-5 should be red to Vancouver, Canada. For example, Seattle commuters want to go to Microsoft. They are going to trade and go down I-90, if we constrain this bridge. They are also going to use new I-405 capacity, which is designed for local travel. Seattle residents are going to move around to the clearest facility. We need to understand the full picture. There are going to be ramifications.
- Senator Horn stated that we have to know where the problem will be shifted. Kirkland? Bellevue? Issaquah? The people still want to go there.
- Connie Marshall asked whether items held constant were highlighted. Also, whether planned improvements to I-405 were included. Les Rubstello responded that the project did not plan on any improvements for I-405. A slight change to I-5 and the interchange to I-405 were taken into account. He also mentioned that a sensitivity test was done with I-405 and SR 520. It kept more trips on the eastside and didn't really affect cross-lake traffic. Connie stated that not including planned improvements was shortsighted.
- Bryan Cairns, City of Mercer Island, inquired as to whether there were pragmatic cut-offs to these models. Also, he wondered whether there were realistic impositions that were put on this model. Les responded that the real answer is no. The project looked at growth rates and actual volumes on the ground. The consultant will be asked to include a discussion in the write-up, if something looks really unusual. There will also be a small sensitivity analysis. The project feels that staying with the model is advisable.
- Fred McConkey, Town of Hunts Point, commented that people will move, if growth becomes intolerable. We will never get to these congestion points.
- George Martin, City of Clyde Hill, asked how many lanes there would be from Montlake to Roanoke. Les responded that for both the 6- and 8-lane alternatives there would be the same number of lanes. There are two HOV lanes with a center flyer stop at Montlake. The WSDOT standards give the buses a certain length to get up to speed.
- George Martin asked whether the Montlake to I-5 design was new. Les responded that it was not – it has been available for a year; however, the project team may not have sat down with Clyde Hill to discuss it.

Maureen concluded the discussion by reiterating that this meeting is a summary, of project status. WSDOT would like to sit down with committee members and their staff, separate from this meeting, to share this information in full and to discuss the “what-if” scenarios.

## **PROJECT STATUS**

Maureen Sullivan opened by stating that the region still has a corridor at risk. The floating bridge and its approaches are aging, vulnerable to windstorms over 50 mph, and vulnerable in major earthquakes. The project needs to find a way to reduce costs. Most of the consultants are on hold for the time being. The remaining money will be devoted to very specific activities. There is more tolling work that needs to be done. Community meetings will take place. WSDOT is still working on the issue of stormwater and with the communities on lid configurations. The project itself is looking to ramp down between now and June 2003. If additional money does not come forward, then the project will ramp down further.

WSDOT put together a draft of a lower-cost project. Les continued by describing the potential project elements:

- 6-lanes, 24<sup>th</sup> Ave NE to 80<sup>th</sup> Ave NE including noise walls (\$1300M);
- 76<sup>th</sup> Ave NE lid (\$30M);
- Arboretum ramps (\$15M);
- WB 520 to SB I-5 express lanes ramp (\$15M);
- WB HOV off-ramp to Montlake Blvd (\$10M);
- Bellevue Way flyer stops (\$10M); EB direct HOV access to 108<sup>th</sup> Ave NE (\$15M);
- 4-foot buffer along right-side HOV lanes (\$30M);
- expandable pontoons (\$95M); EB HOV lane and shoulders, 80<sup>th</sup> to Bellevue Way (\$70M); and 84<sup>th</sup> Ave NE & 92<sup>nd</sup> Ave NE lids (\$60M).

The core project would amount to roughly \$1.65 billion. All of the enhancements are still shown, with some elements just done more economically. The project met with Sound Transit and Metro, which provided suggested transit connections [bullets 4-7 above]. Logical additions were broken into segments. The full project, including I-5 vicinity, Portage Bay, and Montlake, would amount to \$1.97 billion. WSDOT is interested in what members think are the right pieces to add.

Maureen indicated that the next step of the project is to find \$7-10 million to do the following: complete preliminary engineering for all design options; provide input to the Regional Transportation Improvement District (RTID) and other funding sources; continue community outreach; finalize cost estimates and schedule; and complete EIS process in 2 years or less.

The following questions and points were brought up at this time:

- Fred McConkey, Town of Hunts Point, stated that about a year ago it seemed that the project prices were quite significant. What is the difference between this and the 6-lane project before? That was a \$6 billion project. Les responded by naming a few items that

were excluded from this core project, including the 9-lane Portage Bay Bridge, two lids, reconstructing ramps – basically adding to a billion dollars. There is a significant amount of the project which is not included. Maureen added that WSDOT will continue to look at funding sources.

- Dave Dye, WSDOT-UCO, stated that it is important to get input from this group to help define the core project. It is really a continuation of phasing. This same discussion happened regarding I-405, SR 509, and hopefully here.
- Dan Becker, City of Medina, wanted to know when WSDOT is looking for decisions to be made. Maureen responded that she and Aubrey Davis have talked about the committee coming back together in January 2003.
- Dan asked for clarification regarding the cost of the pontoons in the core project. Les responded that the cost is to make the pontoons bigger to float some later weight of HCT.
- Dan stated that his assumption is that the \$1.65 billion is a new bridge and then the existing bridge would be removed. What about a seismic retrofit and replacement of the existing bridge? Les responded that the seismic retrofit has been looked at since the beginning of the project. The approach structures are all constructed with hollow piles. A seismic retrofit is not part of current alternatives. Les offered to walk Dan through this at some other time.
- Tim Ceis, City of Seattle, commented that earlier decisions were made under an expedited process with the assumption of available money.
- Dave Dye stated that the 6-lane preliminary preferred alternative (PPA) decision doesn't necessarily go away, and that this thinking is consistent with the PPA decision. WSDOT is likely to generate enough funding, and can always revisit.
- Tim asked if WSDOT has budgeted going through the record of decision (ROD), and, what is the estimate? Maureen responded that it is 7-10 million over 2 years.
- Tim commented that some of the decisions WSDOT wants are regularly made through the EIS process. The decisions in January 2003 are being driven by funding and not the EIS process. He is concerned about political deadlines driving project deadlines and the implications. Maureen responded that in terms of trying to give a range to RTID, there are a lot of variables to be considered.
- Dave Dye commented that this is the same issue in every one of the corridors. WSDOT is still going to look at all the options in the EIS. There is a conversation about the scope of the whole program: Do you narrow your study? Continue moving forward with the corridor vision?
- Tim requested that at the next committee meeting there be a discussion of what process the project is in now, where it is planned to go, and what recommendations are expected of committee members. The project is in a different place than when the committee picked the PPA in September. WSDOT cannot do any of this work without money. Dave Dye acknowledged this comment as correct and responded by saying that the project is focused on pulling enough money together to at least get to a ROD. Six or nine months into this process it could get RTID funding, which may necessitate an accelerated approach.
- Tim commented that what the project is really doing right now is trying to scope a budget. Dave Dye responded by stating that the project is taking the last, best information WSDOT has. As RTID develops its final list, WSDOT needs to bring this

up and have the conversation. Tim stated that it is critical to have this discussion right now.

- Connie Marshall, City of Bellevue, commented that the PPA is not going to change because of RTID. The region needs to decide what phase of this project it is going to fund, if there is RTID money. Members need to decide what part of the PPA is most critical and affordable, if there is RTID money. The other pieces are not going away because there is no budget today or in the fall.
- Tim commented that he was referring to what the PPA means in the process in which the committee is now engaged. It is a question of what to use for the environmental work. He was not revisiting that decision.
- Grace Crunican, City of Seattle, asked Maureen to clarify two points: the 2-year timeline for completing the EIS process; and the basis for the \$7-10 million. Maureen responded that the 2 years is the time it takes whether that process gets started now or later. The \$7-10 million is a cost range for the elements that are now in the EIS.
- Dan Becker asked if the EIS process would start in June as soon as the legislature acts. Maureen responded that is correct. Dave Dye commented that the EIS process has begun, we are in it, but activity is metered.
- Grace Crunican asked if there is money in the budget. Dave responded that there is no text in the current law budget because it assumed the passage of R51.

## **TOLLING REPORT**

Mike Cummings, WSDOT, gave a tolling analysis update. There are three types of analysis – individual corridor projects, system level (all lanes and total corridor), and RTID projects. WSDOT has found that more analysis is needed, policy objectives for tolling need clarification, and the roles of RTID, Transportation Commission and Legislature regarding tolling need clarification. There are two pricing methods – economically efficient tolling and revenue maximizing tolling. If SR 520 is tolled individually (not part of a regional tolling system), the toll revenue estimate is \$18-31 million per year in 2014. Associated with this figure are numerous implementation issues and traffic diversion and impacts. If SR 520 is tolled as part of a regional system, it will generate an estimated \$26-46 million per year in 2014. Associated with this figure are numerous implementation issues.

If WSDOT tolls the entire facility, then there will be diversions – approximately 20-30%. A lot of things go into what constitutes a diversion, such as time displacements, location, trips, etc. A hot lane tends to make the facility more efficient, more attractive.

The following questions and points were brought up at this time:

- Grace Crunican asked what I-5 generates in the model. Mike responded with 45%.
- Dan Becker asked what I-90 generates. Mike responded that he would check and get back to him.
- Grace asked if diversions to I-90 were assumed. Mike responded that they were.
- Grace commented that currently WSDOT's budget for operational costs is approximately 20%. Mike responded that bridges tend to be higher at 30-40% for operational costs.

- Grace commented that this scenario assumes only RTID facilities. Does diversion go down if the whole facility is tolled? Mike responded that it did.
- A member of the public asked if the assumed technology allows the commuter to check current toll rates before he or she is on the road. Mike responded that technology a decade out would be a lot different than it is now.
- Jack Crawford, Sound Transit Board, asked if any consideration was given to the effect on SR 522, if SR 520 is tolled? Mike responded that traffic on SR 522 would increase.
- Rosemarie Ives, City of Redmond, asked what it costs to take the bus. Mike responded that in the economically efficient pricing, buses were free. If you maximize revenues, then buses are tolled.

Maureen concluded that this was not a proposal. If members would like to see this information, they should go to the project website. WSDOT can also send the reports. At this time, Maureen referenced an, informal survey, asking respondents to rank items in the state's transportation system and provide recommendations for the Transportation Commission. Maureen asked that everyone fill it out and return it before they leave.

## **STRAIGHT TALK ON TRANSPORTATION**

Doug MacDonald, Secretary of Transportation, opened by talking about the HOV proposal that the Commission will hear about in January. A good HOV system is central to WSDOT's vision. WSDOT, with urging from the legislature, has been talking to the public to increase support for the HOV system. They are looking at ways to liberalize the system, such as opening up HOV lanes to GP traffic. There is a philosophical divide over the issue.

WSDOT learned that the HOV system works particularly well during peak hours. Those people in the GP lanes are beneficiaries of the HOV lane as well as the HOV riders. HOV lanes are extremely important to the bus system, vanpools, etc. Two issues emerged:

- 1) Great use of the I-5 lanes presented safety questions. In particular, the Northgate entrance to the southbound express lanes when the lanes are running northbound, and the southbound termination of the HOV lanes near S. 320<sup>th</sup> St. in Federal Way.
- 2) WSDOT looked at two separate systems. The I-5 HOV lanes were close to efficiency all day. The I-405 HOV lanes had unused capacity between the peak travel times.

There is a question of where efforts can be directed toward using existing capacity. Looking at opening some of the system east of the lake between the peaks, WSDOT found that with growth and demand rising, it is foreseeable that the mid-day capacity opportunity on I-405 and 167 will disappear. The HOV lanes will be filled in the next few years.

Doug posed the question: What is WSDOT going to do as a policy matter? They are not proposing to touch I-5. The I-405 HOV lanes status quo is not the solution. WSDOT will need to consider the switch from 2-person to 3-person HOV lanes. The environment the region faces necessitates doing something about pricing. WSDOT doesn't have a proposal. A significant commitment will be needed to put something like this in place. As growth increases, the logic of congestion pricing will be more apparent. The process is for WSDOT to present this information to the Commission.

WSDOT does not have a capital investments program – this is a trust and accountability issue. The state should have a ten-year plan for transportation capital investment. With the support of the legislature and the Commission, WSDOT has changed that, endorsed a proposal to change the way the transportation budget is presented. WSDOT has five potential sources from which to build a capital investments program – gas tax, RTID (an important piece of what the legislature did the last session), state flex money, funds that are available to citizens, and trains.

The amount available over the next 10 years is about \$4.8 billion. \$3 billion is federal funding coming into this state. There is flexible money in the amount of \$300 million. RTID today is at zero dollars. Cities and counties have two types of money – dedicated and discretionary. WSDOT assumed that in order to show money coming from cities, they would look at their previous investment. There are also several more miles of lanes for cities. WSDOT is going to reduce the discretionary funds of cities and include an explanation of the city view.

If you look at the state at a whole – transit has money but is not rich by any means. It is made up of \$7.9 billion, including \$2.1 for transit agencies, \$4.3 for Sound Transit, and \$1.5 for the monorail. There is a desperate need for operating funds within the transit system. The next 10 years present quite an opportunity for transit. From 1991-2002 there were \$3.9 billion in funds. There is now about \$8 billion available over the next 10 years.

The ten-year outlook for the department's \$2.9 billion preservation program includes: re-paving 80% of "lowest life cycle" standards, excluding I-5 and I-90; preserving bridges and structures at 95% level; and replacing the east half of the Hood Canal Bridge. The ten-year outlook for WSDOT's improvement program includes investing \$1 billion in highway additions and improvements (as compared to \$5 billion in 1991-2002).

It is important to note the power of RTID to contribute. The program calls for regional decision-making and regional funding for regional needs, statewide programs to begin addressing deferred investment and support regional programs, and a return to the "region of origin" fairness test. Referendum 51 was killed by the notion that the Puget Sound was going reap all the benefits. That is why Washington needs a capital investment plan.

The following questions and points were brought up at this time:

Richard Conlin, City of Seattle, commented that there is a need to radically revise the way in which the transportation system operates. The discussion needs to be open to a lot of different ways to fix the system – not just pricing, such as 2- and 3-person HOV lanes. WSDOT needs to think about alternative ways to use these roads.

## **MEETING ATTENDEES**

### *Executive Committee Members*

<b>Present</b>	<b>Name</b>		<b>Organization</b>
	Asher	Dave	City of Kirkland
X	Becker	Dan	City of Medina
X	Berry	Jeanne	Town of Yarrow Point
X	Cairns	Bryan	City of Mercer Island
X	Ceis	Tim	City of Seattle
X	Conlin	Richard	City of Seattle
X	Crawford	Jack	Sound Transit Board
X	Crunican	Grace	City of Seattle
	Davis	Aubrey	Washington Transportation Commission
	Earling	Dave	Sound Transit Board
	Edwards	Bob	Puget Sound Regional Council
	Hughes	Gary	Federal Highway Administration
X	Horn	Jim	Washington State Senate
X	Ives	Rosemarie	City of Redmond
	Jacobsen	Ken	Washington State Senate
X	Krochulus	Rick	Federal Transit Administration
X	Marshall	Connie	City of Bellevue
X	Martin	George	City of Clyde Hill
X	McConkey	Fred	Town of Hunts Point
	McKenna	Rob	King County Council
	Murray	Ed	WA State House of Representatives
X	Noble	Phil	City of Bellevue
	Okamoto	John	WSDOT - NW Region
	Pflug	Cheryl	WA State House of Representatives
	Sullivan	Cynthia	King County Council
X	Taniguchi	Harold	King County Department of Transportation
	Wills	Heidi	City of Seattle

### *Executive Committee Alternates*

<b>Present</b>	<b>Name</b>		<b>Organization</b>
X	Burleigh	Mary-Alice	City of Kirkland
	Bowman	Jennifer	Federal Transit Administration
	Carpenter	Trish	Town of Hunts Point
	Conrad	Richard	City of Mercer Island
	Creighton	Mike	City of Bellevue
	Demitriades	Paul	City of Medina
	Drais	Dan	FTA
X	Dye	Dave	WSDOT - NW Region
	Earl	Joni	Sound Transit
	Fiske-Zuniga	Anne	City of Seattle
	Hague	Jane	King County Council



	Jahncke	El	City of Mercer Island
	Kargianis	George	Washington Transportation Commission
X	Mathis	Dan	Federal Highway Administration
	McKenzie	Jack	Town of Hunts Point
	Paine	Thomas	City of Redmond
	Rourke	Philip	City of Clyde Hill
	Rutledge	Steve	City of Yarrow Point
	Sanchez	Susan	City of Seattle

### *Project Team*

Les Rubstello, WSDOT-UCO  
 Maureen Sullivan, WSDOT-UCO  
 Doug MacDonald, WSDOT  
 Mike Cummings, WSDOT  
 Greg Wornell, WSDOT  
 Renee Montgelas, WSDOT  
 Barbara Gilliland, Sound Transit  
 Eric Chipps, Sound Transit  
 Joy Goldenberg, EnviroIssues

JHG